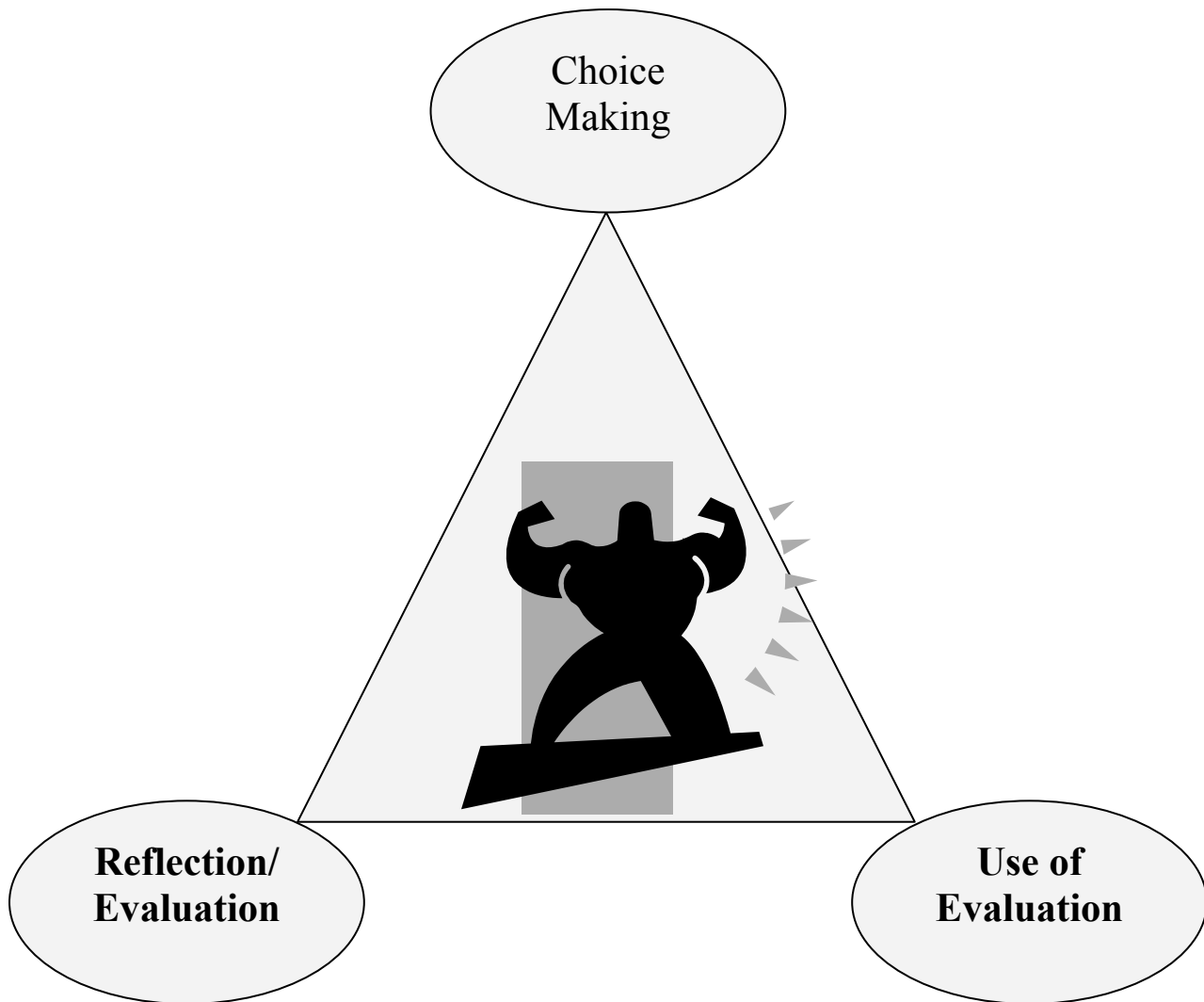


# Self Determination Module



Developed by  
Inclusive Large Scale Standards and Assessment Group  
University of Kentucky  
2003

notes

## Self Determination Module

**S**elf determination, the ability to make effective and personal decisions in all aspects of life, is a critical skill for all individuals to learn. Most people are given many opportunities to learn and practice this most basic of all rights (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1998). However, many people with disabilities are either not provided with those same opportunities (Falvey, 1995) or they are not given direct instruction on how to make effective decisions. What we know about self determination is that the complexity of this process requires direct instruction if people with severe disabilities are expected to learn to make choices and then evaluate the effectiveness of those choices. If self determination is not taught in a structured way, it is unlikely that people with severe disabilities will become effective in this area (Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996).

Bambera and Koger (1996) cite several ways that using self determination can enhance a person's quality of life:

- By increasing satisfaction in everyday activities (centered around personal preferences)
- Making one more independent (effectively being in control of one's life)
- Decreasing the need to resort to problem behaviors (which often result from the lack of choice and control)
- Increasing motivation to learn (being in control is a motivator for participation).

Self determination, in the context of learning, might be thought of as the process of exerting some degree of control over the educational process. This can occur when students are given opportunities to make choices within activities, reflect upon or evaluate their own performances, and make adjustments to aspects of their performance based upon those self evaluations in regards to future learning.

When thinking about teaching self determination, it is important to remember:

- The student must be involved in making the choices and evaluating his/her own performance
- The process of self determination is instructional, not independent, at this level
- Self determination does not mean making choices without any guidelines, rules, or parameters.

The educator's responsibility in administering self determination instruction is to guide the student throughout the process, modeling the thought processes



notes

and strategies necessary to make effective decisions (Anderson, Albin, Mesaros, Dunlap, & Morelli-Robbins, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). However, in order for students to learn self determination, it is important that they be actively involved in the entire process (Browder & Bambera, 2000). Otherwise, it isn't **self** determination! For students with the most severe disabilities, this is hard to do. Many of these students either do not have a communication system at all or are inconsistent communicators so teachers feel as if the self determination process is above what they are able to do. In reality, students with those performance characteristics are difficult to instruct and assess overall. Educators continually strive to help these learners receive and give all types of information, of which self determination is one part. The style and abilities of each student will help the instructional team to make the best decision regarding how much self determination instruction is enough. For students who are able to demonstrate their understanding fairly quickly, once a week might be plenty. For those students who are not such effective learners and communicators, self determination instruction might need to be presented daily or several times a day.

The broad outcome of self determination can successfully be broken down into its components and those components can then be instructed systematically (Kleinert, Denham, Groneck, Clayton, Burdge, Kearns, Hall, 2001). Instruction would include providing planning opportunities, instruction, practice, and feedback.

## Student Vignettes

The following student vignettes describe 2 students who will be used as examples throughout this module. While these 2 children are typical of students who may need structured self determination opportunities and instruction, they may not be exactly like students whom you know. It will be necessary to adapt the information in this module to meet the individual needs and abilities of the students you are teaching.

Carlos is a student with a severe disability who requires pervasive supports. He uses a wheelchair which he can self propel for very short distances, uses an augmentative communication device with up to five choices and with verbal cues. He will identify common objects and is beginning to use picture symbols. He needs prompting to attend to an activity or task for longer than 3 minutes. Carlos frequently needs to rest following seizures which occur approximately six times per day. Carlos' IEP objectives include:

- Identifying picture symbols
- Self-propelling wheelchair for moderate distances
- Following verbal and/or pictorial directions involving 3 to 5 steps
- Matching shapes
- Using 1 to 1 correspondence
- Independently initiating communication using augmentative system



notes

- Remaining on task for 5 minutes with natural cues
- Writing responses to two response item questions for inclusion in his portfolio

Evelyn is a student with a moderate disability, requiring limited to extensive supports. She is verbal but difficult to understand due to articulation difficulties. She is able to write her name if not required to remain on the line and can copy printed text. She can identify approximately 50 high frequency sight words and short sentences when picture cues are provided. She counts to 39 consistently and to 100 with some mistakes. She can count by 5's if provided with number cues. She can take care of self-care skills but needs verbal reminders. Evelyn's IEP objectives include:

- Writing vocabulary words independently or using available resources (e.g. word cards)
- Increasing high frequency sight words
- Answering recall questions when material is read
- Identifying numbers to 100
- Using a calculator for computation
- Using measurement tools
- Improving articulation, using picture symbols to supplement verbalization as needed

## Choice Making

The first step in developing the skill of self determination is to learn how to make effective choices. In fact, Holub, Bang, and Lamb (1998) defined the process of self determination as choosing goals and working toward achievement of those goals. Effective choices are those that:

- Allow for the inclusion of personal preferences
- Provide a means to exert control
- Bring about a positive or desired result

Choice making can be done at two levels: **everyday choices** and **boundary choices**. Smull and Danehey (1994) define everyday choices as those that have an immediate impact on a situation but rarely have long term effects and boundary choices as those that have direct and long term effects on a person's lifestyle, education, and/or vocation.

Examples of everyday choices are:

- The button shirt or the pullover shirt
- Chocolate or white milk
- Sports video or music video
- Red marker or blue marker
- Watch a movie or listen to a cd



notes

Everyday choices for Carlos might be to select what he wants for snack, decide what book he wants a peer to read to him, and what fund raising activity he thinks the student council should engage in. Carlos' choices could be documented by either anecdotal recording or a data sheet. Examples of each follow:

**Anecdotal record:**

*October 1: When Mrs. Morris held up a bag of chips, a pack of cheese crackers, and a snack cake, Carlos reached for the cake.*

*October 2: Maurice, as he held up each item, asked Carlos which snack he wanted and Carlos vocalized when the chips were shown. (Maurice had just chosen the chips for himself.)*

*October 3: Constance held up each snack item and Carlos reached for the cake.*

**Data sheet:**

Item	10/1	10/2	10/3	10/4	10/5	Comments
chips		X				10/2: vocalization; chose what Maurice had just chosen
crackers						
cake	X		X			10/1: reached (Mrs. Morris) 10/3: reached (Constance)

Everyday choices for Evelyn might be deciding to do the odd number or even number problems, what outfit to wear for the class photos, and what to watch on tv. Both recording methods used for Carlos could also be used for Evelyn. Additionally, Evelyn's choices could be documented as a peer/teacher/her own note on a work sample or through a short, audiotaped journal entry.

Mrs. Land let me pick  
what numbers I want.  
Evelyn

Boundary choice making can effectively be linked to instruction, creating both a context within instructional components and ownership over the learning process. Ownership over learning is facilitated by the inclusion of individual goal setting, student preferences, and learning styles. Some appropriate opportunities for instructional choice making are found in the following areas:

- Materials
- Methods
- Places
- Supports
- Scheduling



notes

Examples of boundary choices are:

- Go to work or stay home
- Reading first or math first
- Computer or tape recorder
- Work with John or Sarah
- Work on spelling or punctuation
- At my desk or in the library
- Use magnetic letters or the dry erase board
- Use a checklist or picture cards

To help students learn how to make boundary level choices, it is sometimes helpful to frame the instruction with questions such as these:

- What will I do today?
- What do I want to do first/next?
- What materials do I want to use?
- Who do I want to work with?
- What do I want to work on?
- Where do I want to work?
- How do I want to learn?
- What help do I want?

Boundary choices for Carlos might be what class he wants to propel himself to (goal setting), with whom he wants to work on a task (student preference), and whether he wants to use real objects or representative symbols to indicate his answers/choices during science (learning style). Boundary choices for Evelyn might be how many words to learn this week (goal setting), measuring plant growth by inches or centimeters (student preference), and using picture symbols or photos to supplement verbalizations (learning style). Documentation of boundary choices for Carlos and Evelyn could be accomplished by any of the methods mentioned in the section on everyday choices.

### Guided Practice

Place an E next to everyday choices and a B next to boundary choices.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make toast or cereal                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose colors to use in art                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch cartoons or video                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Decide whether to make a collage or paint            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear gym shoes or loafers on P.E. day          | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on math packet or spelling homework first       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose project for science fair                | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete a book report or a Power Point presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice spelling on the computer or worksheet | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose Pepsi or Mountain Dew                         |



## Reflection/Evaluation

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Reflection/Evaluation can be centered on either the instructional activity or its components or student performance. If choice making centers on the activity, the reflection/evaluation will be about:

- Whether the student liked the activity or not
- If the student would like to do the activity again

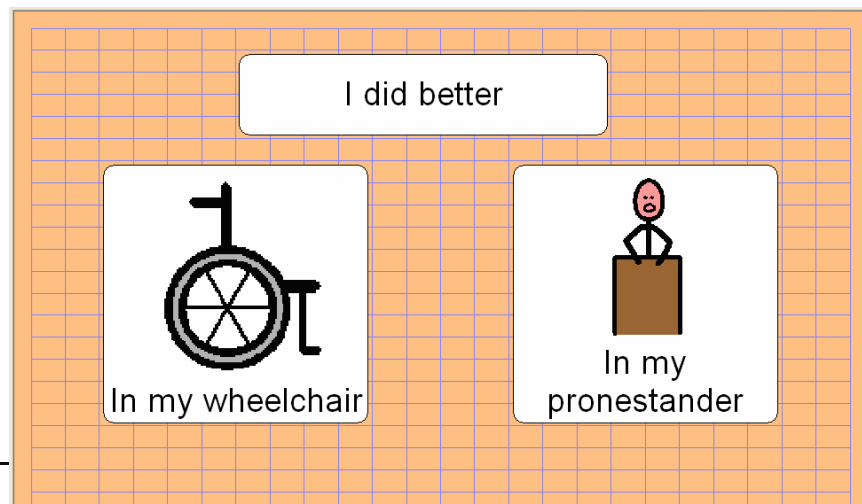
If Carlos reflected/evaluated on the instructional activity, he might make those statements using his augmentative communication device. Documentation might be accomplished through peer or teacher notes or through a copy of his communication overlay with the choice indicated. If Evelyn reflected/evaluated on the instructional activity, she might make those statements either by written notes (hers or someone else's) or an audiotape. Those methods would also be used as the documentation.

If choice making does actually center on boundary level instructional control, students are well on their way to reflecting upon or evaluating their own performances. The process of reflection/evaluation will give the student information on:

- What the student did well
- What the student needs to improve


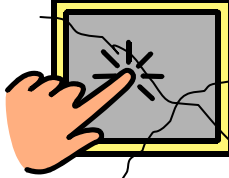

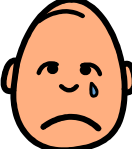

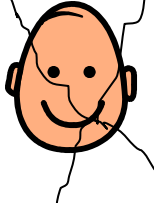
If Carlos and Evelyn reflected/evaluated their own performances, their teachers might help them make comparisons between their performances on consecutive days in light of what the learning process might have been like (materials, methods, places, supports, and scheduling). For example, Carlos might have discovered, with the help of his teacher, that he did better using his communication device while in his chair than in the prone stander (places) and this could be documented through methods described previously.

Overlay example:



notes

Evelyn might have realized that she is completing more computation problems correctly when she uses the strategy of being more careful when she touches the buttons. Her documentation could take several forms, one of which might look like this:

I decided to	Look at the numbers better 	 Be careful which button I touch	Stay on task 
I did	Not so good 	The same 	Better 

*Guided Practice: Place an A by the statements that reflect upon or evaluate an activity and a P by the statements that reflect upon or evaluate a performance.*

- 1. I liked this book.*
- 2. The science fair was fun.*
- 3. I did more math problems correctly than last time.*
- 4. I did not do well today.*
- 5. I don't want to play this game again.*
- 6. I need to remember to look at the pictures when I read.*
- 7. I capitalized the first word in each sentence.*
- 8. I waited too long to hit the switch.*
- 9. I looked at all my choices.*
- 10. The cookies we made tasted good.*

If choice making and the resulting reflection/evaluation allow students some control over the learning materials and learning strategies, information can also be gained regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of those materials and strategies. Reflection/evaluation should be more than just having students determine whether or not they





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did a good job but should help them to identify the way they learn best and how to find out if they made the most effective decision. This will help students in making future self determination decisions.

Instruction on how to compare performances from day to day, goal to goal, strategy to strategy is important if students are to learn how to make objective evaluations. Having students compare performance graphs (their own or the teacher's) or work samples are good ways to accomplish this.

Examples of combining boundary level choice making with reflection/evaluation are:

- Deciding if the use of beginning sounds is more effective than sight word memorization
- Comparing the accuracy of using a calculator or touch math
- Seeing if it is more difficult to hold his/her head up in the wheelchair or the prone stander
- Looking at whether it is easier to copy from the board or from the textbook
- Determining if he/she should work harder on scanning all available choices or indicating the correct choice more directly
- Which switch he/she uses better - the leaf switch or the joystick

To help students learn how to reflect/evaluate their own work, it is sometimes helpful to frame the instruction with questions or phrases such as these:

- How did I do?
- I did a ...(quality descriptor)...job.
- I need to work harder on...
- Next time I will try to...
- What do I need to do better?

In order to make choices and the resulting reflection/evaluation in learning activities the most meaningful, it is important that all of this activity be directed toward the student's performance, which is, hopefully, on a targeted IEP goal. It might be helpful to think about choices and reflection/evaluation as:

- Breaking a complex or broad skill into small components as the student chooses (e.g., oral reading might be broken into sight word memorization, using letter sounds, using context clues)
- Setting a goal (e.g., getting 7 or 8 math problems done in 5 minutes)
- Deciding what learning strategies work best (e.g., better sustained eye gaze in the wheelchair than in the tumbleform chair)



notes

*Guided Practice:*

- A) *Break down the following skills into components that a student might choose to work on:*
1. *Making a choice using eye gaze*
  2. *Solving math problems on a calculator*
- B) *Select several strategies a student might use when:*
1. *Picking up manipulatives in math*
  2. *Learning sight words*

**USE OF EVALUATION**

Learning to reflect upon and evaluate a performance is important but it does no good unless that evaluation is used to extend or adjust that performance to make it better the next time (Martin & Marshall, 1995). If students have made choices and reflections/evaluations regarding their performances, it should be clear by comparing as to whether their performance:

- Declined
- Stayed the same
- Improved

By reviewing their original choices (re: materials, methods, places, supports, and scheduling) along with their performance, students can learn what needs to change so they can improve. They can then review this information to guide their choices the next time.

If the performance declined, give some guidance/instruction on making different choices. If the performance stayed the same, the choices might change or remain the same until more information in terms of performance can be looked at. If the performance improved, they might make the same choices or increase/change the goal.

In the example of Carlos, reflecting/evaluating his performance on using representative symbols in science might indicate that he continues to “not do so well”. Some guidance will help him to select a different strategy next time. His overlay might look like this:

I will work on

look at the pictures

be careful where I touch

Next time, I will

I did

not so well


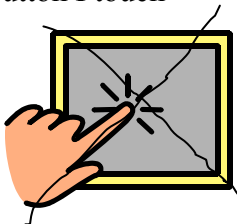

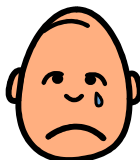

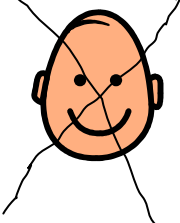

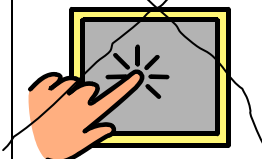

the same

better

notes

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In the example of Evelyn, reflecting/evaluating her performance might help her to realize that her chosen strategy of being careful when she touched the buttons is working as her computation chart shows an improvement in performance. After using her reflection/evaluation, she might want to continue using the same strategy:



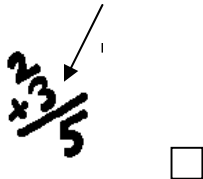



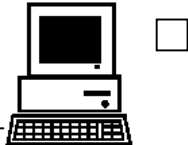

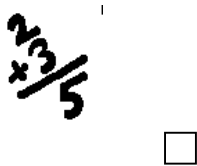


I decided to	Look at the numbers better 	Be careful which button I touch 	Stay on task 
I did	Not so good 	The same 	Better 
Next time, I will	Look at the numbers better 	Be careful which button I touch 	Stay on task 

math class

$$\left( \begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 3 \\ \hline 5 \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 3 \\ - 1 \\ \hline 2 \end{array} \right)$$



Goal: Using dots, add to 20.

I need to practice	Count first group	Count second group	Count carefully																																												
																																															
I will practice by	Using math book	Using store ads	On the computer																																												
																																															
How did I do?			<table border="1"> <tr><td>100%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>90%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>80%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>70%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>60%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>50%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>40%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>30%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>20%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>10%</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Date →</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	100%				90%				80%				70%				60%				50%				40%				30%				20%				10%				Date →			
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*Guided Practice: Looking at the preceding self determination worksheet, answer the following statements.*

notes


1. *If the student's performance declined, what might you guide him/her to do next time?*
2. *If the student's performance remained the same, what might you guide him/her to do?*
3. *If the student's performance, improved, what might you guide him/her to do?*

The following four pages (pp. 14-17) are student work samples reprinted from the 2002 Kentucky Alternate Portfolio webpage. Pages 15 and 16 should be considered together as one sample. Page 17 shows how documentation of student participation in self determination learning might be evidenced for a student who does not communicate in a form that lends itself to direct self documentation.














notes

**SCIENCE**



Goal: Write short sentence to describe a picture of things studied in science.

<p>I need to practice</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Writing everything I say</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Use my word book to help me spell</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Work when asked to</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>I will practice by</p>	<p>Copy from the Science book</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Write with help from a friend</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Using a model</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>How did I do?</p>	<p>100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10%</p>	<p>100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10%</p>	<p>100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10%</p>	
<p>Where did I work?</p>	<p>Need to work harder on</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Writing what I say</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Use my word book to help me spell</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Work when asked to</p>  <input type="checkbox"/>



notes

Using a Schedule - Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation 97

Student **Leslie**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

JAN 11 2001

Last time I said I needed to work harder on:

following the schedule with icons	choosing the right activity	choosing by myself	selecting an activity faster
-----------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------	------------------------------

Today, after I indicate which activity is next, I will:

choose the icons to my schedule	choose my seat	ask a friend to help me to choose
---------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------------------

Monitoring:

Today I selected \_\_\_\_\_ activities by myself.

more	the same as	less
------	-------------	------

I selected the activities \_\_\_\_\_ than yesterday.


faster	the same as	slower
--------	-------------	--------

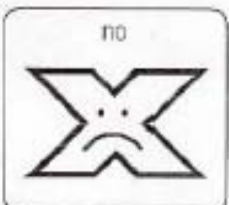


## Use of Evaluation


notes

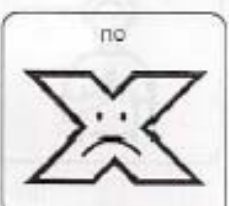
I kept my eyes on the pointer. 98

yes 

no 


I chose the activities in the right order.


yes 


no 


**Evaluation:**

Next time I need to work harder on:


following the pointer with eyes 

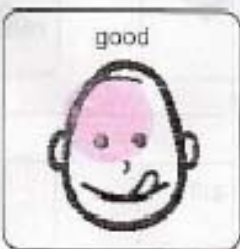
choosing the right activity 


choosing by myself 

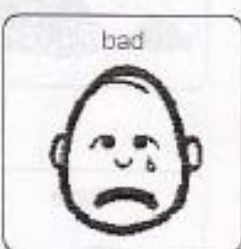
selecting an activity faster 

Overall, I think I did a \_\_\_\_\_ job today.

great 

good 

OK 

bad 

I helped Leslie fill out this sheet today Donnell

(Peer)



**Planning:**

I will use my switch to:

☐ communicate    ☐ operate computer    ☐ operate a tape player**Today I will work on:**

## Head switch

- ☐ tilting my head toward switch
- ☐ making head contact with switch
- ☐ moving my head away from switch

## Hand switch

- ☐ Initiating hand movement
- ☐ moving my hand toward switch
- ☐ making contact with switch
- ☐ moving my hand away from switch

**Monitoring:**

## Head switch

- ☐ tilted head toward switch
- ☐ made head contact with switch
- ☐ move head away from switch

## Hand switch

- ☐ Initiate hand movement
- ☐ move hand toward switch
- ☐ make contact with switch
- ☐ move hand away from switch

**Evaluation:**

☐ Did better    ☐ Did the same    ☐ Did less  
I am having more success with the ☐ head switch ☐ hand switch

**Extension:****Next time I need to work harder on:**

## Head switch

- ☐ tilting my head toward switch
- ☐ making head contact with switch
- ☐ moving my head away from switch

## Hand switch

- ☐ Initiating hand movement
- ☐ moving my hand toward switch
- ☐ making contact with switch
- ☐ moving my hand away from switch

**Answers for Guided Practice**

notes

**Page 6, Everyday and boundary choices**

- Everyday choices are make toast or cereal, watch cartoons or video, what colors to use in art, Pepsi or Mountain Dew.
- Boundary choices are on P.E. day, wear gym shoes or loafers, choose project for science fair, practice spelling on computer or worksheet, collage or paint, math packet or spelling homework first, complete a book report or a Power Point presentation.

**Page 8, Reflect or evaluate on activity or performance**

- Statements 1, 2, 5, and 10 illustrate reflection or evaluation on the activity by focusing on the students' opinions of the instructional events.
- Statements 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 illustrate reflection or evaluation on the students' performances, focusing on how the student did or what the student needs to improve upon during the instructional event.

**Page 10, Break skill down or identify strategies**

- look at all the choices, look longer at the one I want, hold my head still, etc.;
- match the numbers, hit the numbers in sequence, be careful when touching the buttons, use the correct signs, read the numbers back, write down the correct numbers, etc.
- place items to my right side, left side, or center;
- practice on the computer, listen to a tape when looking at the words, write them in sand, find them in text, etc.

**Page 13, Self Determination worksheet**

1. Change the practice strategy or the materials,
2. Keep everything the same or change the strategy or materials,
3. Try a different strategy or materials or increase the goal



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